

Training in extreme cold

Gunnery Sgt. Charles Portman

Headquarters, 3rd Bn., 25th Marines, Cleveland

FORT RICHARDSON,

Alaska — Upon landing here March 19, Marine reservists of 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment kicked off Exercise Arctic Dagger, the unit's primary two week annual training period.

The exercise is a test of the unit's ability to operate in extreme cold weather conditions. This is the first time 3rd Bn. has conducted cold weather training in Alaska, according to the unit's Inspector-Instructor, Lt. Col. David K. Undeland.

Marines of 3rd Bn. have been designated as a Marine Forces Reserve cold weather unit for many years. In addition to training at bases in the continental U.S., the unit has traveled to Canada, Chile and Norway in the past to conduct cold weather training exercises.

When they arrived at Fort Richardson, the unit initiated a training schedule that allowed its members to hone their mobility skills in the snow and fire their weapons in the extreme cold. Some elements of the battalion practiced surviving outdoors in freezing temperatures for days at a time.

"There are a lot of moving parts, here," said Lt. Col. Richard Fitzwater, battalion commanding officer. "Wet and cold is the worst weather you can have. We've got to watch out for our Marines during this exercise," Fitzwater told the battalion staff.

3rd Bn., 25th Marines, is a reserve infantry battalion headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio. Subordinate units

are located in Akron and Columbus, Ohio; Buffalo, N.Y. and Moundsville, W. Va.

Units attached to 3rd Bn., 25th Marines for the exercise include members of the Dayton military police unit and a team of combat engineers from the reserve training center, Cross Lanes, W. Va. Instructors from the Mountain Warfare Training Center, Bridgeport, Calif., and the Army NWTC are also supporting the exercise.

Third Battalion has a long history, which includes storming the beaches at Iwo Jima on Feb. 19, 1945. In

August 1950, members of the unit mobilized from their downtown Cleveland headquarters to participate in the Korean Conflict, one of the coldest operations in Marine Corps history. The unit was activated for Operation Desert Storm in 1991.

Undeland says this kind of training is very challenging, but necessary.

"We have to be ready to go at a moment's notice," he said. "We could receive a call to go fight somewhere in the arctic just as easily as we were called to support operations in the desert back in 1991."



Photo by Gunnery Sgt. Charles Portman

Marines from Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd Bn., 25th Marines, Cleveland, received some cold weather training at Fort Richardson, Alaska. The unit participated in Exercise Arctic Dagger, the unit's two-week annual training period.